

THE MEDIA DISCOURSE ON WIND ENERGY

The harnessing of wind as an energy source has a long history. One merely has to look at the sailing boats that used its power to traverse seas. Wind has also been used to mill grains and to pump water. The Netherlands were the homeland of windmills in Europe – and even now the variations on post mills, with four sails placed on wooden or walled buildings, are one of the country's main symbols and tourist attractions. Today, in Europe it is Denmark that leads the way in wind energy, along with Germany and Spain.¹

The importance of windmills decreased with the arrival of steam machines, followed by electric engines, and the advent of the steam and electricity era. Only in the late 19th century was the first wind turbine producing electric energy constructed. Charles Brush erected the first such construction to produce electricity in his own garden, using it to illuminate his mansion. Although wind is a free energy source, the electricity generated was too expensive owing to the high costs of building a turbine. The wind-generated electricity could not compete with the power from a fossil-fuel power station, whose availability did not depend on the weather.

Modern wind energy began to develop in the 1970s, when the oil crisis made it necessary to search for alternative energy sources. The beating heart of the sector was in California, home not only to strong winds, but above all to inviting tax breaks as well as the Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act (PURPA), which meant that energy had to be bought from small producers. The Californian wind craze acted as an incentive for innovative solutions in Europe. Wind farms were built in California, but the technology was Danish.

1 *BP Statistical World Energy Review*, 20 June 2015, BP, <http://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy.html> (access: 25 June 2015).

Denmark had a wealth of “wind” traditions, out of which technological ideas grew. By 1987, 90% of the new wind turbines installed in California were Danish-produced (Yergin 2011: 1146).

In the early 1990s, energy prices began to drop, tax breaks were scrapped, and the wind industry collapsed. Its renaissance began in the second half of the decade, following protests from environmentalists, and its growth is helped by demands for reduction of CO₂ emissions.

The first wind turbines producing electricity in Poland were installed in 1991 at the Żarnowiec Hydroelectric Power Plant² (where the Lisewo wind farm can now be found) in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. The first industrial farm was opened 10 years later in Barzowice (West Pomeranian Voivodeship³). In 2015 Poland was among the top ten countries in terms of installing new capacity.⁴ Data shows that wind turbines generate 3% of energy produced in Poland (Lacal-Arantegui, Serrano-Gonzalez 2015). This is a modest result in comparison to Denmark, which in 2014 covered 40% of its energy needs with wind energy (Lacal-Arantegui, Serrano-Gonzalez 2015). This difference is explained by the fact that Polish energy is largely based on coal,⁵ a local resource, and entered the renewable energy sources (RES) market considerably later than Denmark or Germany, as well as by the moderately favourable conditions for building wind farms. Wind energy is the most dynamically growing renewable energy source, and yet it does not get a great deal of exposure in the general news media. Materials on the subject appear relatively rarely – only a few programmes broadcast on radio and television⁶ in the analysed period (2013–2014) covered the subject. Wind appears either in opposition to other energy sources, or marginally as an element of RES, which themselves tend to be discussed in relation to other energy topics. It is a similar story in the press.⁷ Although there are more articles in terms of numbers, wind energy appears only sporadically, and wind turbines are presented as local energy sources. Issues related to energy feature in the local press much more often than nationally, remaining

2 The Żarnowiec Pumped Storage Power Station is the biggest hydroelectric power plant in Poland. It has worked since 1983 and was prepared as an additional storage of energy for a nuclear power plant which was planned to be built in Żarnowiec.

3 The West Pomeranian Voivodeship is still the region that dominates with regard to generating capacity. This is because seaside belt conducive a good condition for wind energy plants. (Wind Energy in Poland 2010, http://www.paiz.gov.pl/files/?id_plik=14293) (access 20 May 2016).

4 Global Wind Energy Council, 2015, http://www.gwec.net/wp-content/uploads/vip/GWEC-Global-Wind-2015-Report-April-2016_22_04.pdf (access: 20 May 2016).

5 The Polish energy system is in the process of restructuration, but coal remains the most important source of energy.

6 The methodology of the research project was outlined in detail in A. Wagner, “Organising the research.”

7 The major Polish daily newspapers and opinion weeklies were analysed between 2007 and 2014. More information in A. Wagner, “Organising the research.”

a subject of interest to the local communities that have or will have wind farms nearby. The press does not present wind energy in a global context. Examples from other countries do occur occasionally, but only as positive reference points. The media discourse appears to be atomised, localised to specific places, and concentrated around individual wind farms.

In periodicals, information about wind as an energy source is usually given by brief snippets of news, with little room for in-depth analyses and explanations. Radio and television broadcasts are seldom devoted to wind energy – it is more frequently discussed as a certain type of RES. There is a lack of extensive information and thematic or educational programmes on wind energy, or on RES as a whole.

Actors engaged in the wind discourse

The discourse on wind energy is dominated by men. The actors who are most active in the press are politicians, mostly local – city and mayors and heads of communes and villages – while it is investors who are dominant in internet sources (we analysed texts from the following information services: *Gazeta.pl*, *Onet.pl*, *Interia.pl*, *Dziennik.pl*, *Cire.pl*, *Wnp.pl*). Experts also include individuals associated with the Environmental Protection Fund, the Agricultural Market Agency, the Institute for Renewable Energy, unnamed representatives of the RES sector, and current and former ministers. Representatives of other areas of renewable energy also appear: hydroelectric power stations (Society for Development of Small Hydroelectric Power Stations), solar energy (Polish Photovoltaics Society) and agricultural energy (Polish Chamber of Biomass). Giving organisations of this kind a voice indicates a civil society involved in energy issues.

The investors presented in the press are usually company presidents (Geo-Wind Polska, Eco Wind-Construction S.A., Tauron Polska Energia S.A., RWE, SUneks⁸). Their full names are given, as well as the company names. Only in the case of PGE⁹ is there a more lengthy description (“vice-president for development of the country’s largest energy company”). Readers are given no, or only rudimentary, information on investors or any affiliations they might have. Such presentations make social worlds distant. This distance is not shortened. Knowledge on partners potentially interested in the processes of deliberation and participation proves to be minimal, which makes the process inefficient.

8 Companies form the energy sector in Poland.

9 The PGE is the largest energy sector company in Poland.

The processes of deliberation and participation generally take place with the participation of third-sector organisations. It is important to note that the NGOs appearing in the analysed material include both the Polish Wind Energy Association (e.g. *Puls Biznesu*, 21 October 2013; *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 24 January 2013), and the Stop the Planned Wind Power Station in the District of Gołcza Association (*Dziennik Polski*, 19 April 2013, 18 April 2013), i.e. both proponents and adversaries of the development of wind energy in Poland. These are often local organisations (Eco-Rymanów Association, I Love Warmia Association), but also include those operating on a wider scale (Institute for Renewable Energy, Polish Power Transmission and Distribution Association, European Wind Energy Association).

It is characteristic of the wind discourse that actors are given the floor more frequently than in the nuclear energy or shale gas discourse. In these two cases, actors seldom have the opportunity to express themselves directly, as instead their words are used and woven into the discourse, serving as argumentative strategies. The main primary actors in the wind energy discourse, permitted to make independent statements, are politicians – mostly local and national – and investors. “Citizens” (meaning people not representing either a political party or a non-governmental organisation) rarely have a voice. They more often feature in the press as a local community or informal group. Local leaders or activists are usually linked to NGOs. No teachers or priests figure in the discourse. School, according to Michel Foucault, is “a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses” (Foucault 1981), and could therefore be used as a means to lobby and exert influence. Schools and churches continue to be important opinion-forming centres, and could perhaps also become a deliberation space. Yet they do not exist in the media discourse; the press does not cover their engagement. Actors involved in science – scientists as well as institutions – play a similarly small role in the dialogue, and the marginal role they play impoverishes the discourse. Those experts who do feature tend to be associated with economics and financial markets, as well as, less often, technology. The absence of representatives of the social sciences and humanities is an example of “separation,” i.e. the procedure of ignoring things that are “someone else’s problem” – SEP), exclusion of actors from the discourse, and in this case also their knowledge resources and interpretive perspective.

Figure 1 presents the frequency of occurrence of the various primary actors. The larger the font, the more frequently a given actor appears in the collected material.

Alongside the primary actors, we also identified implicated actors, i.e. those with no opportunity to make a direct statement – they are cited, and their statements are interpreted, and sometimes taken out of context. In the press, it is companies/company departments, local government and the state



Figure 1. Primary actors appearing in the press

Source: own elaboration.



Figure 2. Implicated actors appearing in the press wind discourse

Source: own elaboration.

that are dominant. As with primary actors, the representation of citizens is marginal and marginalised, meaning that it is not only ignored, but also not given the opportunity and possibility to participate effectively in social life. This discourse seems to reflect the possibilities of participating in the distribution of goods.

The wind discourse map is Polish-centric, as this form of energy is discussed in the context of Poland. Other countries appear only sporadically, generally used solely as examples of good practices and attractive solutions in this sector. The countries cited in this way are dominated by Germany, which is the European leader in exploitation and production of wind energy as well

as construction of power stations (cf. Lacal-Arantequi, Serrano-Gonzalez 2015). Denmark, in second place in Europe on the list of countries harnessing wind power most effectively, appears only occasionally in the analysed discourse, as do other countries – Spain, France and the USA.

As in the case of primary actors, investors (companies and company departments) are involved in the discourse. Local government is also represented. The investor-local government duet models the discourse in the economic perspective. Business representatives, i.e. actors of the economic market, use arguments based on profits and losses. It is a similar story with local government, for which the key word is “development,” usually meaning investment in infrastructure or new jobs.

The wind discourse is dominated by local politicians and investors, who construct an independent economic subdiscourse, consisting of rational arguments based on profits and losses. There is no room here for other, non-economic arguments, such as environmental ones. The residents of the actual or proposed sites for wind farms also refer to measurable profits and losses, but also attempt to discuss issues concerning the environment, health, and the quality of the landscape.

Power — interests — knowledge

In the Foucauldian vision of discourse, knowledge and power are inextricably linked. Knowledge is a product, as well as a tool, of power. Yet Foucault does not explain either concept precisely, and one can trace their evolution (Czyżewski 2009: 85). In the poststructuralist phase of his work, he understood power no longer as just the external effect of a structure on individuals, but also as “an immanent process tied to knowledge and discourse which operates as a technique on all levels of society” (Lemert, Gillan 1999: 82). It is hard to imagine any social reality without the relation of this kind of power. It “cannot but evolve, organise, and put into circulation a knowledge [...]” (Foucault 1980: 102).

In the online discourse concerning wind energy, the role of creators of knowledge has been taken by experts, and specifically (non-university) research groups, commercial companies and NGOs. We can observe expert knowledge presented by the specialists cited in the articles, for example investor representatives, government officials, and employees of consulting companies.

According to the investor’s expectations, turbines are capable of producing over 100 GWh of electric energy per year. (<http://www.tygodnik.onet.pl/>, access: 1 June 2014)

The power of the farm would then reach a level of over 45 MW. These investments will increase the total installed power of RWE Renewables in wind energy in Poland to 197 MW (<http://www.cire.pl/>, access: 22 April 2013)

Similarly to the case of press discourse, we can mention the Polish Wind Energy Association, the leading consulting company Ernst & Young, the Energy Regulation Office and the International Energy Agency (once each), i.e. the third-sector organisations and consulting firms that would in this case produce the knowledge resource. The knowledge “produced and introduced into circulation” by the mentioned actors mostly concerns issues related to economics.

Data from the Polish Wind Energy Association shows that the average value of property tax in 2011 was 65,800 PLN for each wind turbine installed. The local communes earned a total of 66 million PLN. In 2020 this could pour 212 million PLN into commune coffers. (*Dziennik Polski*, 14 May 2014)

One wind installation brings the community 653,000 PLN annually, according to the consulting company EY, which *Rzeczpospolita* quotes. (*Gazeta Pomorska*, 24 October 2013)

In the wind energy discourse, the most frequent references are to practical knowledge concerning everyday matters.

Let's try to produce even small amounts of energy on our own, where possible. [...] In Germany this type of solution is very popular. (*Gazeta Lubuska*, 23 April 2014)

The dominance of common, everyday knowledge probably results from wind's cognitive accessibility. The empirical studies quoted in the discourse are used as an argument to support a specific position (in this case showing the positive aspects of wind energy). Paradoxically, ignorance can also be an argument.

I haven't heard of them bothering anyone. (*Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014)

[...] these estimates will remain very uncertain. (<http://www.wnp.pl/>, access: 7 January 2014)

Also unknown is the future scale of micro-production, which will enter the market with a result that is perhaps surprising, because – to quote a comment heard recently – how can one understand the fact that a tiny turbine is 20 times as expensive as a washing machine? (<http://www.wnp.pl/>, access: 18 April 2014)

“Production” of knowledge is not everything; access to channels of distribution of information and knowledge constitutes the source of domination, and is thus equally important (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992). Power is generated in the institutional field thanks to specific resources, and remains accumulated in the hands of the symbolic elites – or in other words, the privileged classes.

Interest groups concerning energy issues in Poland are most clearly visible in the context of coal. The economy is based on this raw material, and in need of transformation. In the case of wind energy the stakeholder groups are not defined especially sharply. The first such interest group comprises residents, yet their place in the discourse does not receive much exposure. With the exception of a radio programme in which residents of the commune of Miastko protest as the mayor did not consult with them on the construction of a wind power station, the presence of residents in the press is scarcely visible. They are mentioned in the context of social consultations, and sometimes also protests against the construction of a power plant. Usually, however, they are portrayed as being satisfied with the new investment and proud of the turbines, perceived as symbols of the commune's development. The residents' interest seems to be purely economic. Financial gain dominates timid mentions of issues relating to quality of life ("Participants in an excursion asked the locals whether they weren't bothered by the turbines," *Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014).

The rhetoric of examples that characterises discourse immediately gives a reassuring response. The quality of life with turbines in the background differs from that without them only in terms of the health of one's purse. The financial benefits are presented as being the most important and obvious factor. The actors – residents of the sites where wind farms have been built – speak of the money that these farms have brought them. The financial gains are described as significant and large, but are not specified with concrete sums. Both residents and the representatives of local government also point to the additional income to the commune, but no details are given.

The next group of stakeholders, who are also present only to a limited extent, is trade unions (in this case the West Pomeranian branch of Solidarity) representing the employees (and potential employees, as in this case) of the wind industry. According to television reports, the lack of legal regulations delays the process of appointing a new board, which is supposed to produce the foundations for offshore wind power stations. Trade unions are interested in work and appropriate pay. The unions operating in the wind industry are also concerned with assuring suitable legal regulations to support the opening of wind farms.

Politicians have a large representation in the wind discourse, especially local ones – heads of communes and villages and mayors, and much less often those operating at a national level. The power of local politicians is based on their knowledge of an investment. In accordance with Foucault's conception, knowledge generates inequalities. Local authorities are generally presented as being in favour of investment, with the leading motif being financial gain. For small settlements the taxes paid by investors are a serious injection into their budget, which is why the representatives of the authorities can talk of the development of the commune, mentioning investments in the infrastructure and potential jobs.

The knowledge and power of local structures can lead to the release of mechanisms of corruption, and there are traces of such situations in the analysed discourse. The source of this corruption is exclusive knowledge of the planned energy investments. The owners of the plots in which the turbines are erected receive compensation. An example shown on television is the case of the commune of Kleczew, where turbines are located on a plot belonging to the mayor. Local authorities do not always actually support investments. The media note that officials demonstrate sluggishness in making decisions, and sometimes also a lack of good will.

The next group is investors. Their interests are not articulated, as they are players of the economic system and their actions are subordinated to the logic of profit, yet it seems obvious that their objective is financial gain. For example, a television programme presents a company with a very strong position on the market, as it produces parts for power stations used by half of Polish wind farms.

The dominance of investors in the media demonstrates that their power over channels of communication is of some significance. It is they too who have access to sources of empirical knowledge. The links between investors and third-sector organisations, especially those supporting development of wind energy, are not clear. The media often cite data generated by NGOs, their expert reports and estimates, which are used as an argument in favour of the development of wind energy. Environmentalists, meanwhile, remain the great absentee of the wind discourse. The only representatives of the community promoting sustainable development in the internet wind discourse are people associated with the Green Institute, cited in the role of experts. Environmentalists also appear sporadically in the press, as representatives of NGOs, including the Safe Energy coalition, or as an informal group. Paradoxically, they are opponents of wind energy.

One of the Polish paradoxes is the fact that among the strongest opponents protesting against wind power stations are environmentalists, who should surely by definition be in favour of clean renewable energy. (*Nowa Trybuna Opolska*, "Nie używajmy demagogii do walki z wiatrakami" [Let's not use demagoguery to tilt at windmills], 20 June 2013)

Diagnosis of communication strategies

The wind discourse is dominated by positive value judgements. Positive discussions of wind energy highlight wind farms' contribution to development, which is treated as an important positive value and desirable characteristic. Development

is better and faster (when the commune has a wind farm on its land), the energy is ecological, and the investment prestigious (“we have gained prestige,” *Gazeta Wyborcza Kielce*, 20 March 2014) and modern. The residents of the communes that are home to these investments are presented as being satisfied (“we have good lives here,” *Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014], also in material terms (“they received a decent sum of money,” *Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014).

The construction of wind turbines contributes to better and faster development of the commune and to satisfying the needs of residents by realising a larger number of investments. (*Dziennik Polski*, 19 April 2013)

The enthusiasm seems incredible: “according to 70% of respondents, wind turbines have a positive impact on the landscape” (*Dziennik Wschodni*, 25 April 2013). While windmills are a picturesque addition to the Dutch landscape, it is another matter to appreciate the charm of modern wind farms composed of several enormous posts with revolving sails.

Development is a value that often occurs in texts on wind energy, usually understood from the perspective of economic calculations. Sustainable development, environmental issues or quality of life do not feature. There is a clear orientation towards the future, connected with the foreseen future benefits that individuals and the entire local community are likely to experience. Constructing a vision of the future is the next communication strategy used in texts on energy. In the press discourse, the future tends to be painted in darker hues. It is hard to speak of a bright future when an energy-guzzling world needs more and more energy, which is becoming increasingly expensive. Furthermore, the media adopt a catastrophic tone to proclaim the end of the world as we know it, meaning the end of coal as the most important source of energy in Poland: “The era of coal using the current technology is ending, and we need new ideas for using it” (*Dziennik Wschodni*, 14 March 2014).

The world needs clean, green energy from renewable sources. Wind energy is a solution. The visions of the future in this context are positive and concern a rather distant or not precisely defined time. An example is these online comments on a Bloomberg New Energy Finance report:

As much as 70 percent of new generation capacity in global energy by 2030 might be provided by renewable energy, according to the Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) report. (<http://www.cire.pl/>, access: 24 April 2013).

Marcin Wójcik of the Foundation for Sustainable Energy believes that the Pomeranian and West Pomeranian voivodeships could gain tremendous benefits from offshore wind energy. “Not just from taxes and fees for location permits,” he explained, “but also from creating new jobs.” He said that in 2030 the development of 6 GW of installed power could bring 35,000 jobs, and that developing this branch of energy will contribute to the development of the port infrastructure. (<http://www.cire.pl/>, access: 24 April 2013)

According to the conducted research, the future of wind farms seemed to be optimistic.¹⁰ The media discourse is lacking, however, precise explanations, or even attempts to show the relations between various energy sources.

Alongside very positive descriptions of wind farms we also find those that paint a somewhat different picture. Above all, these concern the emotions that make it difficult or impossible to decide to open a farm.

Wind farms have become a new source of unhealthy emotions among the region's inhabitants. (*Dziennik Polski*, 17 April 2013)

Contrasting emotions – negative ones – with rational knowledge – which is judged positively – leads to marginalisation of the position of groups following their emotions. Residents, whose actions are most often described from this point of view, are not included in the rational debate on the opportunities for wind energy.

Yet most of the texts containing adverse value judgements are those giving a negative verdict on wind energy development in Poland (“Unfortunately Poland does not have suitable legal regulations,” *Gazeta Lubuska*, 23 April 2013). This means in particular a law and tax relief system favourable to investments. Development of wind energy is now so advanced in the world that the perception of wind as an alternative source of energy is slowly coming to an end. It is a fully fledged part of the energy system.

The lines of argument are constructed around a strategy of “the example of others.” The press often cites other communes with already active wind power stations. It also reports on visits made by the residents of communes mooted as sites for turbines to places where they are already in place.

Participants in an excursion asked the locals whether they weren't bothered by the turbines.

“There's no problem. I live about 500 metres from a turbine. It doesn't bother me at all,” said a man from near Margonin in Wielkopolska Voivodeship. [...]”

“I haven't heard of them bothering anyone. Sometimes you can hear them – it depends on what the weather's like, how strong the wind is and from which direction. But it's not a noise that causes any amount of annoyance. [...]”

“I've lived right in the middle of the farm for four years. Our property is surrounded by turbines on all sides. None of us has got ill from that. I had a healthy granddaughter born three months ago. Don't believe any strange stories,” says a resident of Kowalowo in Margonin commune who attended the meeting. “Yes, I do profit from it in various ways, as I get money for leasing the land.” (*Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014)

10 In 2016 in Poland a new act was passed that regulates the conditions for the construction of new wind power plants. Many RES organisations protested against the new law. They claim that it will slow down or even stop the progress in the wind energy industry.

The residents' opinions on wind farms reported by the press are very positive. The interviewees barely notice any difficulties at all with the proximity of wind turbines to their homes. They also possess knowledge that is empirically tested, and therefore presumably more credible, on the negative consequences of wind power stations. The residents deny beliefs that wind turbines cause illnesses, basing their positions on their own experience.

"Study visits" are a consequence of the frequent protests of local communities against wind farms. The protests themselves are neither described nor analysed in any great detail in the press, but rather mentioned with reference to information on the consultations that have taken place.

Investments in wind farms often encounter opposition from the local communities. These fears are associated, for example, with noise. [...] The majority of the residents of the villages where wind farms are planned are generally against the investment. (*Gazeta Lubuska*, 22 March 2014)

The aforementioned "study visits" are part of social consultations. The residents have the opportunity to learn about places where wind investments already operate and acquire knowledge about them.

The "example of others" argumentative strategy discussed above also has an international application, as journalists frequently cite examples from abroad. In Poland there are considerably fewer wind turbines than elsewhere. "The saturation of wind power stations in Poland is among the lowest in Europe" (*Dziennik Wschodni*, 25 April 2013).

Poland's engagement in RES is also lower than in other countries in the continent. Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands are presented as models worthy of imitation, as modern and progressive states:

The new paradigm of the 21st century is flexibility in the supply of energy and managing the demand for it: modern (private) network operators in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and the USA base their planning on the lowest possible marginal costs. The network in these countries is supplied by sources of all kinds [...] renewable sources not using fuel, such as wind and solar power. (*Gazeta Wyborcza Tricity*, 24 March 2014)

Renewable energy, mainly wind and solar, is treated as a synonym of progress and development. For many experts this is the only possible path in contemporary energy matters.

The next argumentative strategy is to use numerical data, both absolute and percentages. These are often large numbers – thousands, millions ("The EU does not take into account the fact that 90% of energy in Poland comes from coal," *Polska – Dziennik Zachodni*, "Pakiet antywęglowy" [Anti-coal package], 28 November 2013). The numbers provide order to the discourse, making it seem more credible. Quantified economic arguments are more persuasive.

According to an analysis by DnB NORD and Deloitte, thanks to extraction [of shale gas] Poland's GDP will grow in 2013–2022 even by 3%, and 1000 people will find work. (<http://www.tygodnik.onet.pl/>, access: 1 June 2014).

As Poland Wind Energy Association (PWEA) president Wojciech Cetnarski said during the 8th PWEA Wind Energy Conference, this sector has already invested 18 billion PLN in building 2.5 GW of power in Poland, and according to the national action plan it could spend another 86 billion PLN by 2020, including one third directly in the country on services and equipment (reo.pl) (<http://www.www.cire.pl/>, access: 24 April 2014).

Arguments are strongly economic, subject to the logic of profits and losses.

We want to have our own energy at the lowest cost. (*Gazeta Lubuska*, 30 January 2014)

The investment can be profitable not just for the commune, but for residents too. (*Dziennik Wschodni*, 25 April 2013)

The wind discourse is not only an economic discourse, but a legal one too. Many situations are explained by the lack of appropriate laws. The imperfections of the law, but also officials' incompetent application of it, cause delays to the investments, and even to negligence. The law works too slowly, which makes institutions ineffective both economically and politically. It is generally national/Polish law that is discussed, as well as local resolutions; legal matters are seldom covered, commented upon and discussed in broader terms. References occur in the context of reports from sessions of commune/district councils.

"I think that the Commune Council will take the result into consideration," he said. "What that means is that in the spatial development plan it won't be able to designate areas for constructing wind turbines." (*Dziennik Polski*, "Koniec walki. Wiatraków nie będzie" [Tilting over: There won't be any windmills], 23 April 2013)

The referendum on turbines is the first in Małopolska. The decision to hold it was made by the Commune Council. (*Dziennik Polski*, 18 April 2013)

The media do not become a field of deliberation on the law. There is a lack of proposals and discussion on legislation. They only inform, report and provide reference points. The problem that remains is the lack of legal regulations, usually understood as an obstacle to development. The law is the mechanism that hinders investments or results in their discontinuation. In this context EU law features mostly in a negative context as a source of repression. The CO₂ limits introduced result in high fines being imposed on everyone who does not keep to the new rules ("According to the EU directive, by 2020 Poland is to attain a 15% share in renewable sources in energy use," *Dziennik Polski*, 17 April 2013).

The analysed materials contain scant references to climate policy. Emissions reductions are presented as a technical objective that must be conformed to.

Between quality of life and development

Quality of life and development are two paradigms of the modern world. Though understood in different ways, they are viewed in positive terms. Development is a guided process of positive social changes (Sztompka 2002). In the analysed discourse, development is construed from an economic point of view. Wind farms assure financial gain at the level of both individual households and the commune. The benefits are measurable, and perceived as attractive.

Lesław Blacha, head of the commune of Gołcza, who argued that wind turbines will allow the commune to develop faster. (*Dziennik Polski*, 23 April 2013)

Waldemar Pawlak said, among other things, that it is a myth that renewable energy is more expensive than traditional sources. Referring to the situation in the Świętokrzyskie region, he said that when looking for ways of development and a better life for the residents of less economically developed areas, one should see their chances for a civilisational advance in production of green energy. (*Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014)

In the analysed discourse, there are two dominant values: the environment and the safety (health) of individuals (as opposed to the country's energy security). Wind turbines are not always presented as safe and not detrimental to the health of the people living close by.

"We protested, because wind farms are dangerous to people's health. I am not completely opposed to them, but they should be built far away from homes. In our village this distance was definitely too small. There are lots of health risks, and you can easily find them online," explained Kazimiera Wąż of the protest committee. (*Dziennik Polski*, 17 April 2013)

The situation is further aggravated by individuals who wage an information campaign showing the impact that turbines allegedly have on health and quality of life. (*Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014)

Resident of Żary commune: "Wind farms lead to decrease property value, and owing to the risk of failing health, noise, and a ruined landscape it will be harder for us to find a buyer for the house." (*Gazeta Lubuska*, 22 March 2014)

As these examples show, there may be a worsening in the quality of life of the residents of communes proposed as sites for wind farms. Quality of life is determined on the basis of a set of criteria identical for everybody. According to Angus Campbell (1976), it depends on the level of satisfaction in such areas of life as marriage, family life, health, neighbours, friends, household tasks, employment, living in a given country, place of residence, free time, living conditions, education and standard of life. With the discourse we analysed, questions of health security remain problematic. Yet this is not

an argument that appears frequently. Mostly, wind turbines are treated as a symbol of progress.

Information appeared on the commune website, saying, "Construction of wind turbines contributes to a better and faster development of the commune and to satisfying the needs of residents by realising a larger number of investments." (*Dziennik Polski*, 19 April 2013)

THE COMMUNE HAS CASH. Deputy mayor of Margonin Łukasz Malczewski claims that the wind power station has had a large impact on the functioning of the commune. "We're much better off," he says. "This adds around 5 million PLN to our budget, that is one fifth of the entire budget. As a result we can develop." (*Echo Dnia*, 25 March 2014)

Progress means development, usually measured by the economic situation and residents' prosperity. A wind farm is an additional source of income for the commune and its residents. Development is promised both by local politicians (heads of communes and villages) and by their national counterparts. The benefits that a wind farm brings hide the potential discomfort.

An important value is the environment. Wind farms are presented as a clean, environmentally friendly source of energy. In this respect too they are definitely appraised positively.

Wind turbines are an exceptionally clean source of energy. (*Nowa Trybuna Opolska*, 26 March 2013)

Communes are now increasingly often being approached by investors wishing to invest in an environmentally friendly energy source. (*Dziennik Polski*, 17 April 2013)

Examples of topics not covered in the material are the question of birds or the environmental friendliness of the production of the turbines themselves. The emphasis and frequent underlining of financial gains and the cleanness of the energy leads to the separation of topics that do not fit into the idealised image of wind energy. Also almost absent in the wind discourse are such values as justice, interpersonal solidarity and democracy. This points to a de-humanised way of thinking about energy issues. The economic-technocratic perspective does not leave any room for tackling social problems.

Renewable Energy Sources are idealised, and treated even as a kind of religion of postmodernity, to which one must surrender if one wishes to be regarded as progressive.

Renewable energy sources. In the secularising European Union, this notion has taken on almost a religious character. Anyone against RES is backward and an ignorant bumpkin. Anyone who sees the ideal absolute in RES is a progressive and a proper European. Yet renewable energy sources are by no means the gift from the gods portrayed by their advocates... (*Polska – Dziennik Zachodni*, 18 April 2013)

The discourse on wind energy stretches between development and quality of life. The idealisation of green energy means that critical opinions on wind

energy are marginalised. The development and progress made thanks to turbines have an impact on the lives of local communities. The analysed discourse emphasises arguments that support a positive relationship between development and quality of life. Money is a tangible factor that improves residents' quality of life, on both an individual and a social level. At the other extreme to this enthusiastic perspective are claims regarding worsening quality of life owing to health issues. Yet these are not tangible, but rather a scenario that could, but does not necessarily have to materialise. The media construct a positive image of green wind energy, but do not show the possible connections between this and other energy sources. The perspective of strategic management at state level is absent. As a result, wind energy is treated as a local energy source that is of low significance compared to coal or gas.

Democracy and participation

Democracy, and especially participatory democracy, is treated as an important element of civil society. Deliberation is defined as joint, rational reflection on issues of importance for the community (Fishkin 2009). Debate is becoming central for the processes of democracy (Dryzek 2000).

Democracy is not a dominant value in the discourse that we analysed. Only on a few occasions is it noted that questions of energy investments should be the subject of a vote.

One of the main points of discussion in conference rooms and corridors turned out to be the presidential so-called landscape bill, whose regulations, according to the representatives of the wind energy sector, could hamper the development of wind energy and break the constitutional principle of self-government of communes.

"Warmia and Masuria is one of Poland's poorest regions, and needs new investments. We must therefore ask whether the communes should not themselves decide on the future and profitability of using wind energy?" wondered President Krawcewicz. (*Gazeta Olsztyńska*, 30 October 2013)

The councillors from Miastko are giving power back to the residents. In Miastko the democratic responsibility for the most important decisions for the commune goes down a rung. To the village councils. The authorities want to include in the commune statute the obligation to carry out social consultations on the most sensitive issues. Importantly, the council will be supposed to make decisions in accordance with the will of the local community. (*Polska – Dziennik Bałtycki*, 20 April 2013)

"The council is not obliged to make a decision identical to the result of the social consultations, but I think that the voice of society should be respected," admits Chairman Borowski. (*Polska – Dziennik Bałtycki*, 20 April 2013).

The success of deliberation depends on a minimal level of trust and respect. When they begin the debate, the authorities of the communes create a space for shaping the decisions that affect them.

In the discourse, democracy is understood as voting or participation in social consultations. Newspapers inform of the possibility of participation sporadically (six articles were coded). They either write that a referendum will take place (when, where, whom and what it will concern – so an announcement of sorts), or give information about the conditions that must be fulfilled for the referendum to be deemed valid. On the internet too we mostly find references to public discussions.

The analysed press material contains several brief pieces of information about a referendum having taken place, or a consultation meeting or excursion to a place where wind farms operate. Generally provided in this information are numbers (how many people participated in the meeting), references to who took part (councillors, mayor, representative of association, representative of investor, residents), and what the result was. The consultations are usually on planned investments.

Meanwhile the residents of the commune of Lipno do not even want to hear about turbines. In the referendum the majority of them (approx. 90 percent of voters) opposed the building of farms, which Zbigniew Boniek's¹¹ company Bonwind planned to locate there. The councillors respected the people's position and removed places where the wind power stations could have stood from the spatial development study. (*Polska – Głos Wielkopolski*, 21 October 2013)

Social consultations are a tool of participatory democracy. In many cases, failure to employ it means breaking the law. This is discussed by a radio report from Miastko commune, in which the residents protest that nobody talks to them about the new investment. The commune head did not hold social consultations, and thus break the law.

The social consultations reported in the media usually concern investments in a wind power station, and sometimes also broader problems, such as the question of the division of EU money:

The Employers' Union of the Renewable Energy Forum (EUREF) made a number of comments on the proposals for allocation of the next tranche of EU money. Above all they are demanding larger sums for RES and preference to producers of machinery. A total of 24 billion euro is supposed to be available. The EUREF took part in social consultations of the Operating Programme Infrastructure and Environment for the years 2014–2020. (*Kurier Szczeciński*, 29 October 2013)

Democracy and participation do not have a strong presence in the analysed discourse and are not treated in categories of obligation as an ideal

11 The famous former footballer Zbigniew Boniek now owns Bonwind – a company which builds wind power plants.

state. The media therefore do not create the conditions of deliberation. They do not promote participation, for example by encouraging people to take part in social consultations. The *post factum* report fulfils important information functions, but does not open the possibilities of participation.

In the press articles we analysed, there is a lack of space for building a compromise or consensus, or even for building significant differences in the positions taken by the actors. One position is presented, or sometimes two opposing ones, focused on strong emotions, and this tends to favour polarisation rather than building a consensus.

Conclusion

Polish energy is in a process of transformation. The changing political situation (the case of Russia) and EU policy on CO₂ emissions means that the strategy realised to date cannot be sustained. A distributed model in which prosumers – users consuming and producing electricity – participate, seems an attractive proposition. Wind energy is supposed to be one of the solutions to fill Poland's energy portfolio. Yet the discourse observed in the media does not support this option. Above all, it does not provide sufficient knowledge resources regarding RES. There is a lack of suitable educational programmes on radio and television. It is also hard to find such materials in the press or online.

The discourse is dominated by the economic context. Arguments concern the “profitable – not profitable” relation. This is the perspective taken by both investors and local politicians, residents and representatives of NGOs. An important value that often appears in the analysed material is development, which means financial success. Prestige is also understood in economic categories.

The economic context of the discourse is imposed by the groups of investors and local politicians. The perspective of financial gains also proves to be attractive for local communities. The domination of politicians and the economic context can be treated as a kind of counter-sepisation (Czyżewski et al. 1991) involving publicising and making into a subject of interest something that others view as unimportant. Questions of quality of life, meanwhile, which depend not only on the material conditions, but also, for example, on health or the nature of bonds, are overlooked. Residents' fears, expressed during seldom reported-on protests concerning the noise caused by turbines and their effect on health, are depreciated. A similar mechanism can be observed in the environmental field. Wind turbines are presented as

a clean, environmentally friendly source of energy, while the subject of how environmentally friendly production of turbines is and their impact on animals and plants is overlooked.

Wind energy is presented as an important project influencing the development of communes. It is treated in very local terms, however, and not explored from a national point of view. This makes it hard, for example, to discuss the competitiveness of wind power compared to coal or nuclear energy.

The language in which the dialogue takes place does not make it open. As a result, we can hardly speak of any field of deliberation or of joint reflection on the problems of the local community or participation. The examples of social consultations reported in the press demonstrate that the media are emphatically not a place of deliberation. The appropriation of the media space by politicians and investors marginalises other groups with a potential interest in the issue.

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